

Two Out of Five Homes Not Ready for Questar's 2008 Gas Plans

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A new survey indicates two out of five homes are not ready for the gas Questar plans to introduce in 2008 and controversy over the issue is boiling.

Questar says it's a safety issue, keeping deadly carbon-monoxide out of your home. The rallying cry for critics is "Why should we pay for it?"

The new survey can be spun two ways; the glass is three-fifths full or two-fifths empty.

Questar's new gas from coalfields near Price has a lower BTU or heat content. If a furnace is set for the old gas and not readjusted, the new gas will burn a bit yellow indicating carbon monoxide. Coupled with a venting problem, that could be disastrous.

Questar training video: "Any little minor thing that happens to cause that exhaust to come into the house, now I have carbon monoxide coming in instead of products of clean combustion."

For eight years Questar has been preaching the Gospel of the Green Sticker. It certifies a professional furnace adjustment.

Steve Chapman, Spokesman, Questar: "And giving people a ten-year transition period to have their appliances checked and if necessary, adjusted, to accept this new gas supply."

Questar built this temporary processing plant to raise the BTU content of the gas during the ten year adjustment period. If furnaces are ready, Questar hopes to shut it down in 2008 because it costs four-million a year to operate.



Four-hundred and twenty-three homes surveyed by Questar show that with less than two years left, 59% of furnaces are properly adjusted, 41% are not. The company says they always expected a rising curve of compliance over time.

Steve Chapman: "And that's what we're seeing. But clearly we have our work cut out for us. "

Roger Ball, Former Dir., Committee of Consumer Services: "Questar pipeline should pay to fix the problem. They caused it."

Roger Ball has fought Questar's plan for years, starting when he was director of the state's Committee of Consumer Services. He won a brief victory at the Supreme Court, and has another petition pending now.

Roger Ball: "I don't care whether they fix it by keeping the plant running, or whether they fix it by coming around and adjusting all of our appliances. But we shouldn't have to pay for the plant or to fix the appliances."

Questar says this is not a case of "ready or not in 2008, here comes the new gas." Questar cannot make a decision unilaterally to shut down the plant. They promise that will only happen when there's broad agreement that furnaces and water heaters are ready.